Impact of Interactivity on Guanxi Network Building in the Wechat Moments: A Social Capital Perspective

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Abstract

Mobile social platform such as Wechat Moments has gained great popularity in China in the past few years. However, there are still a lack of studies that focus on Guanxi network building in the virtual social community. Drawing upon interactivity and social capital theory, this study develops a research model to examine the influence of perceived interactivity on users' social capital and Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments. An empirical survey was conducted in China and 287 valid data were collected from Wechat users. Structural equation modelling analysis was used to test the research model. The empirical results suggest that interactivity has a strong influence on social interaction and shared understanding, which in turn promote users' Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments. A post-hoc analysis further suggests that the influence of interactivity on Guanxi network is contingent upon network size. Theoretical and practical implications are illustrated in the final section.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of mobile communication technology and the popularity of smartphones, mobile social media application has been widely applied in people's daily life in the past few years. According to the statistics of CNNIC, Wechat Moments is recognized as one of the most popular mobile social platforms in China, and has gained more than one billion active users all over the word by the year of 2017 [7]. The mobile social platform has provided rich media functions such as micro-video and voice-chat, and users can participate in the platform by sharing photos and videos, thumbing up on others' posts, and updating their personal status for communications and interactions, in order to maintain and extend interpersonal relationships in the platform [34, 4].

Previous studies have examined the critical antecedents of individuals' continuance intention of Wechat from different theoretical perspectives. For example, Che and Cao examined WeChat users' attitudes and positive word-of-mouth from a psychological motivation theoretical perspective [3]. Empirical results suggested that entertainment, sociality and information are significant antecedents of users' attitudes, which in turn positively influence their word-of-mouth towards the mobile social platform. In a recent study, Zhang et al. explored the effects of direct and indirect network externalities on users' perceived values and continuance intention of Wechat [34]. It was found that social interaction ties mediate the influence of network externalities on perceived social and hedonic values, which in turn positively influence continuance intention.

Previous literature provides us a theoretical foundation to understand users' participation behaviors in the Wechat platform. However, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have examined user participation from a social capital theoretical perspective, especially in the new research context of Wechat Moments. According to an investigation of user behaviors in the social media, a significant feature of Wechat Moments lies in its social interaction between acquaintances, such as relatives, friends and colleagues, which distinguishes it from other social media applications [34]. Since most of the WeChat friends have been connected offline, people prefer to share their personal photos and videos on the mobile platform, and also, thump up on others' posts. This is beneficial to gain likes and maintain a good relationship network with their friends in the mobile social platform.

In the Chinese society, social networks are equivalent to the cultural construct of "Guanxi", which is a close personal tie among two or more individuals who are bound by notions of reciprocity and mutual support [1,8,25]. In the past few years, the concept of Guanxi network has attracted the attention of IS scholars, and several studies have been conducted to examine its significant antecedents. Specifically, Ou and Davision indicated that communication quality and mutual trust can significantly promote the development of Guanxi networks among employees by using the technology of instant messaging [25]. In another study, Niedermeier et

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al. found that social media is beneficial to create and solidify Guanxi networks between sales professionals and customers [24].

Although Guanxi network building has arose the attention of scholars, most of the extant literatures focused on organizational context, there is scant research that examined individuals' Guanxi network building in the mobile social platform such as Wechat Moments, which differs notably from conventional virtual community [34]. Given the significance of social media in building Guanxi network [25], and a lack of studies in the context of Wechat Moments, it is essential to conduct an empirical study to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact mechanism in the emerging new research context. The remaining open research question drives the research objective of this study. Drawing upon interactivity and social capital theoretical perspective, this study aims to examine the impact mechanism of three dimensions of interactivity, regarding active control, two-way communication and synchronicity, on individuals' Guanxi network, mediated by structural and cognitive capitals. The following research question is proposed to address the research objective: *How do interactivity attributes promote users' Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments?*

The structure of the paper is organized as follows: we first review the extant literatures in social capital, Guanxi, and interactivity. Then we develop a research model and propose the corresponding hypotheses. Thirdly, we address the research methodology and discuss the data analysis results. We conclude with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Social Capital Theory

Social capital was conceptualized as the sum of the assets or resources embedded in the networks of relationships between individuals, communities, networks, or societies [23]. Different from other forms of capital that depends on assets or individuals, social capital resides in the fabric of relationships between individuals and in individuals' connections with their communities [19,27]. Nahapiet and Ghoshal argued that social capital can be divided into three dimensions, regarding structural dimension, cognitive dimension and relational dimension [23].

The structural dimension represents the overall pattern of relationships found in organizations, and it describes the structural links created through the social interactions between individuals in a network [23,27]. The cognitive dimension of social capital refers to the extent to which people in a social network share a common perspective or understanding, and shared language and goals are considered as critical resources of this dimension [23]. While the relational dimension deals with the nature of the connections between individuals in an organization, and the key facets of this dimension are trust, norms, obligations, expectations and identification [23]. Wasko and Faraj extended Nahapiet and Ghoshal's three-dimension social capital framework from organizational context to the electronic commerce context, and examined social capital and knowledge contribution in the electronic networks of practice [30]. In another study, Chiu et al. examined the influence of three social capitals on individuals' knowledge sharing behaviors in the virtual communities [6].

2.2. Guanxi

Social capital theory provides us a framework to understand the three social capitals in the Western countries. However, key elements are missed in the dimension of relationship capital with the sense of face and harmony that are special in the Chinese context.

In the Chinese context, the construct of relational capital is manifested as the notion of Guanxi, which was recognized as a Chinese term referring to interpersonal connections [16]. A large amount of literatures have been conducted to compare the practice of Guanxi with relational concepts and conceptualized Guanxi from different perspectives. For example, Luk et al. indicated that Guanxi is a strong social obligation to give favors to another person that reflects in helping others, returning a favor to others, avoiding any embarrassment, and trusting in others [22]. Wong suggested that Guanxi is an interpersonal relationship including four dimensions of trust, bonding, reciprocity and empathy [32]. In a recent study, Yen et al. divided Guanxi into three dimensions of Ganqing, Renqing and Xinren, and empirically examined its reliability and validity [33]. Ganqing refers to the degree of emotional connections and feelings; Renqing is similar to the owing of a ‘favor’ in an English context; Xinren is a Chinese word relating to trust context [33]. It was argued that Guanxi is an intricate and pervasive relational network which Chinese cultivate energetically, subtly, and imaginatively [33, 38]. There is a call for more empirical studies to adopt the Guanxi construct in the Chinese context [25].

2.3. Interactivity

The construct of interactivity originated from technology affordance theory. Technology affordance refers to individuals’ perceptions and interpretations of information technology by judging whether the technology is appropriate to achieve specific tasks [28,

39]. In the context of social media usage, interactivity was identified as a significant dimension of technology affordance that affects individuals' psychological mechanisms and subsequent behavioral intentions [20].

Interactivity refers to the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized [18]. Based on this conceptualization, the interactivity scale was divided into three dimensions, regarding active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity [17]. Specifically, active control describes an individual's ability to voluntarily participate in and instrumentally influence a communication; two-way communication captures the bi-directional flow of information; while synchronicity refers to individuals' belief that the technology promptly responds to their requirements [17]. The communication media is interactive if it offers individuals active control and allows them to communicate both reciprocally and synchronously.

Given the significance of interactivity in social media usage, this study adopts Liu and Shrum's three-dimension framework to examine the specific influence of interactivity attributes on users' Guanxi network building in the emerging research context of Wechat Moments [18].

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

Drawing upon interactivity and social capital theory, this study develops a research model to examine the impact mechanism of interactivity on individuals' Guanxi network building in the Wechat Moments, mediated by social interaction (structural capital) and shared understanding (cognitive capital). The research model is illustrated in Figure 1. We illustrate the theoretical logic of each hypothesis in the following section.

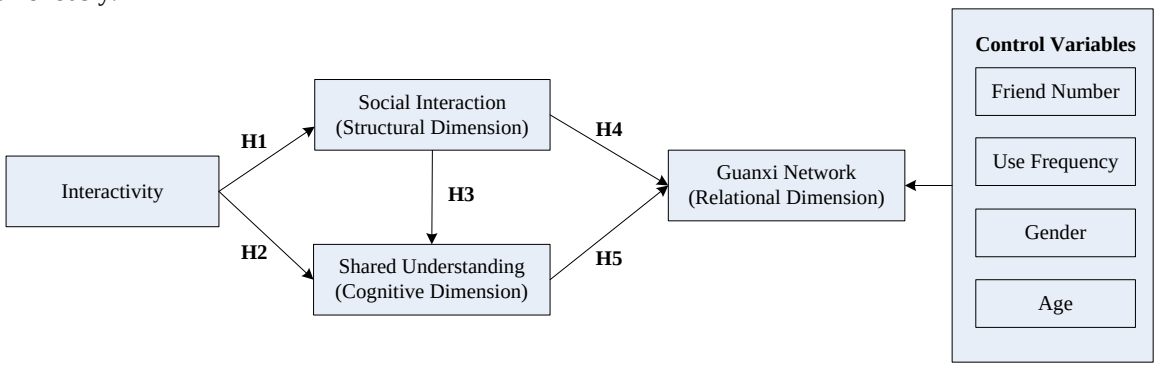


Figure 1 Research Model

3.1 Influence of Interactivity

Interactivity represents the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, which comprises of active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity [18]. Interactivity allows a user to better grasp the feature of a technology and contribute to better performance through the media of information and communication technology, and it was identified as a significant antecedent that promotes individuals' structural and cognitive capital [9,14,18].

The attribute of active control empowers the users to read and comment on their favorite information and shield the information that they are not willing to see in the ICT media [17]. This is beneficial to establish users' cognitive identity with their peers and promote a shared understanding among individuals with mutual interests [13]. The attribute of two-way communication allows the users to intimately connect and conveniently communicate with friends, colleagues, and even strangers in real time [17], which can help facilitate individuals' social interactions with others and accumulate social capital in a network. While the attribute of synchronicity allows users to receive feedback from others instantly without time and location limit [17]. This is beneficial to promote an active interaction and achieve a shared understanding with their peers in the social network. Altogether, a higher level of interactivity in ICT media can promote social interactions and mutual understandings, while a lower level of interactivity in ICT media may reduce social interactions and mutual understandings with others in the virtual communities.

The relationship between interactivity and individuals' behaviors has been elaborated in the previous literature. Paul et al. found that perceived interactivity can improve perceived communication quality in the computer-mediated communication groups [26]. In another study, Hsia et al. reported that the three dimensions of interactivity are significant

drivers in generating user engagement in the context of smartphone usage [13]. In the context of Wechat Moments, higher interactivity empowers accessibility to participate in WeChat Moment more actively and passionately. Users can select the visibility level of released information, set up friends' review privileges, and synchronize information efficiently. This is beneficial to enhance individuals' structural capital by building an effective interaction with other members, and achieving a mutual understanding among friends in the Wechat Moments. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Interactivity is positively associated with social interaction.

H2: Interactivity is positively associated with shared understanding.

3.2 Influence of Social Interaction

Drawing upon Nahapiet and Ghoshal's framework, social capital consists of three dimensions of structural capital, cognitive capital and relational capital [23]. Social interaction was recognized as a significant manifestation of structural capital in the virtual communities [2]. People with common interests and goals can make an intensive communication and interaction, share information and knowledge sufficiently with each other in the online social networks [6]. Koh et al. found that, with members getting more familiar with each other, sense of membership is gradually nurtured and developed [15]. It is the interactions embedded within the social network that facilitate the shared understanding and Guanxi network of virtual community members [6, 36]. Through frequent social interactions, members can be acquainted with others' languages and values [36]. This is beneficial to shape common goals and promote emotional connections ("Ganqing") among virtual community members [36]. Since people prefer to trust those with whom they are familiar in the virtual communities [21]. Social interaction can also help reduce uncertainty and facilitate trust ("Xinren") among members [31,36].

Previous studies have discussed the relationship between structural capital, cognitive capital and relational capital in various research contexts. Empirical results suggested that social interaction positively affects cognitive capital and relational capital in the virtual community [36]. In the context of Wechat Moments, keeping close interactions with members in the social platform is a basis to promote mutual understandings and build Guanxi networks. Members are more likely to find commons and generate emotional attachments if they get more familiar with each other [36]. Through close social interactions, Wechat users can get to know more of others' interests, goals and experiences. This is beneficial to establish "Ganqing", "Renqing" and "Xinren" among members in the Wechat Moments platform. The above analysis leads to the following hypotheses:

H3: Social Interaction is positively associated with shared understanding.

H4: Social Interaction is positively associated with Guanxi network.

3.3 Influence of Shared understanding

Shared understanding was recognized as a significant manifestation of cognitive capital, which describes the extent of similarity that individuals share the collective languages, goals and visions with other members in the organization [12]. In the virtual communities, cognitive similarity is beneficial to enhance relational capital because people have tendencies to get closer to the ones who have common goals and values. Perceived similarity enables the trustor to have confidence in the trustee who are similar with them, which enhances the Guanxi between the trustor and trustee in a positive way [35]. Empirical studies also found that shared understanding and shared languages positively affect a VC member's trust ("Xinren") in other members in the context of virtual communities [36].

In the context of Wechat Moments, people interact with each other to establish a strong Guanxi network in the mobile social platform. Shared understanding in the cognitive dimension can help alleviate the potential barriers and reach an emotional consensus with other members. This is beneficial for the establishment of "Ganqing", "Renqing" and "Xinren" in the Wechat Moments. Thus we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Shared understanding is positively associated with Guanxi network.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Instrument Design

This study refers to the previous literature to operationalize the items for each construct, using 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Interactivity is a second-order formative constructs, which comprises of three dimensions regarding active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity [17], and each

dimension is measured as a first-order construct using three reflective items [18]. Social interaction and shared understanding are adopted from social capital literatures, and three reflective items are used to measure each construct [2,6]. Guanxi is operation-alized as a second-order reflective construct, which comprises of three facets of Ganqing, Renqing and Xinren [33], and each facet is measured using three reflective items.

Table1. Constructs and Items

Constructs		Items	References
Interactivity	Active Control	AC1-AC3	Liu & Shrum (2002) Liu (2003)
	Two-way Communication	TC1-TC3	
	Synchronicity	SY1-SY3	
Social Interaction		SI1-SI3	Chiu et al. (2006) Chang and Chuang (2011)
Shared Understanding		SU1-SU3	
Guanxi	Ganqing	GQ1-GQ3	Yen et al. (2011)
	Renqing	RQ1-RQ3	
	Xinren	XR1-XR3	

The items are translated into Chinese and a double check was conducted by Ph.D. students to guarantee the translation accuracy of the instrument. Several items are modified to better adapt to the research context of Wechat Moments in China. A pilot study was conducted before the final data collection, and a total of 63 college students were invited to complete the questionnaires. We adjusted a few items with factor loadings lower than 0.7 to improve the validity of the constructs [5]. Table 1 describes the items for each construct and the corresponding references.

4.2. Data Collection

An online survey was conducted in China during February to March in the year of 2018. Snowball sampling method was used to collect data. We invited a few colleague students to complete the questionnaires using mobile phones, since university students comprise of the most active users in the mobile social platform such as Wechat Moments (Gan, 2017). Then we asked the students to share the survey in the "WeChat Moments", which is a popular mobile social community in China. A red envelope was provided to the respondents who participated in the investigations. Totally 349 questionnaires were collected from Wechat users in China. After deleting 63 invalid samples with missing or inaccurate data (all 1 or all 7), we finally got 287 valid datasets for analysis. The demographics of the sample is described in Table 2.

As noted in Table 2, the number of female users is slightly higher than male users. In addition, most of the respondents are young people aged between 20 and 30, and most of them possess a bachelor degree. Regarding the use frequency of Wechat Moments, most of the respondents use the mobile social platform for no more than three hours a day, and only 4.2% of respondents reported that they used Wechat Moments for above 6 hours per day. Friend number is investigated to reflect the network size of each user. As illustrated in Table 2, most of the respondents control their friend number within three hundred, and only 5.9% respondents have more than six hundred friends.

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

Items	Types	Numbers	Percentage
Gender	Males	118	41.1%
	Females	169	58.9%
Age	Below 20	30	10.5%
	20-24	108	37.6%
	25-29	73	25.4%
	30-34	29	10.1%
	35-39	20	7.0%
	Above 40	27	9.4%
Education	Senior high school	72	25.1%
	Bachelor	187	65.1%
	Master and above	28	9.8%
Friends Number	Below 100	77	26.8%
	101-200	88	30.7%
	201-300	60	20.9%
	301-400	20	7.0%
	401-500	18	6.3%
	501-600	7	2.4%
	Above 600	17	5.9%
Use Frequency	Below 1 hour per day	68	23.7%
	1-2 hours per day	69	24.0%
	2-3 hour per day	77	26.8%
	3-4 hour per day	42	14.6%
	4-5 hour per day	10	3.5%
	5-6 hour per day	9	3.2%
	Above 6 hours per day	12	4.2%

4.3. Structural Equation Model Analysis

Structural equation modelling (SEM) approach was used to examine the research model [11]. SmartPLS was selected as a primary statistical tool since it can handle both reflective and formative constructs, and is more

appropriate for theory exploration and prediction compared with covariance-based SEM methods [11]. The sample size of 287 can satisfy the requirements of PLS - either 10 times the larger measurement number within the same construct or 10 times the larger construct number affecting the same construct [5].

4.3.1 Measurement Model

Following a two-step analysis procedure, the measurement model was examined to assess the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs. As illustrated in Table 3, the item loadings of each construct have exceeded 0.7, and the Cronbach's alpha for each construct is highly above 0.7, indicating a good internal consistency and reliability of the items. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) from each construct is higher than 0.5, demonstrating an adequate convergent validity of the measurement model [5].

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity Analysis

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	T Statistical Test Value	Composite Reliability	AVE
Active Control(AC)	AC1	0.733	22.092	0.796	0.567
	AC2	0.706	15.938		
	AC3	0.816	32.178		
Two-way Communication(TC)	TC1	0.829	50.479	0.803	0.576
	TC2	0.734	26.861		
	TC3	0.710	18.592		
Synchronicity(SY)	SY1	0.854	55.481	0.852	0.657
	SY2	0.764	26.782		
	SY3	0.812	39.880		
Social Interaction(SI)	SI1	0.776	25.921	0.842	0.640
	SI2	0.794	34.494		
	SI3	0.828	38.903		
Shared Understanding(SU)	SU1	0.782	31.854	0.843	0.643
	SU2	0.806	35.232		
	SU3	0.818	41.880		
Ganqing(GQ)	GQ1	0.833	47.760	0.840	0.637
	GQ2	0.780	31.764		
	GQ3	0.781	39.153		
Renqing(RQ)	RQ1	0.758	31.003	0.838	0.633
	RQ2	0.825	48.998		
	RQ3	0.802	37.995		
Xinren(XR)	XR1	0.777	32.501	0.844	0.644
	XR2	0.803	32.723		
	XR3	0.827	51.906		

Discriminant validity of the constructs is assessed by examining if the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds that construct's correlation with other constructs [5]. This study conducted a correlation analysis according to the above criterion. As noted in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct (the values on the diagonal) is higher than that construct's correlation with other constructs, suggesting an adequate discriminant validity of the measurement model [5].

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

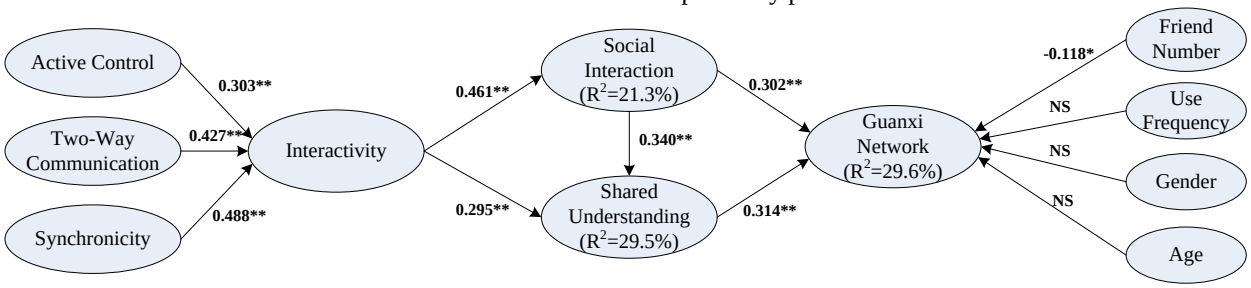
	Mean	S.D.	AC	TC	SY	SI	SU	GQ	RQ	XR
AC	4.223	0.689	0.753							
TC	3.991	0.713	0.403	0.759						
SY	4.169	0.725	0.508	0.560	0.810					
SI	4.103	0.716	0.218	0.458	0.402	0.800				
SU	3.946	0.776	0.180	0.472	0.400	0.472	0.802			
GQ	3.862	0.775	0.369	0.469	0.360	0.365	0.423	0.798		
RQ	3.939	0.702	0.242	0.541	0.401	0.347	0.385	0.635	0.796	
XR	3.568	0.869	0.145	0.372	0.251	0.341	0.319	0.445	0.369	0.802

4.3.2 Structural Modelling Analysis

The structural modelling analysis was conducted to examine the path relationship and explanatory power of the research model. Bootstrapping procedure method was used to calculate the statistical significance of the parameter estimates, which is beneficial to derive valid standard errors or t-values [29]. In particular, this study included friend number, use frequency, gender and age as control variables in the research model, as suggested in the previous literature. The analysis result is described in Figure 2.

As illustrated in Figure 2, interactivity has strong influences on social interaction and shared understanding ($\beta1=0.461$, $p<0.01$; $\beta2=0.295$, $p<0.01$), thus provides support for hypotheses H1 and H2. Social interaction is positively associated with shared understanding and Guanxi network ($\beta1=0.340$, $p<0.01$; $\beta2=0.302$, $p<0.01$), thus supports hypotheses H3 and H4. Moreover, shared understanding has a positive effect on Guanxi network ($\beta1=0.314$, $p<0.01$), providing support for hypothesis H5. In terms of the influences of control variables, Figure 2 suggests that user's friend number is negatively associated with Guanxi network ($\beta1=-0.118$, $p<0.05$), while gender, age and education have no significant influences on Guanxi network.

Regarding the explanatory power of the research model. As illustrated in Figure 2, R^2 value of social interaction and shared understandings are 20.5% and 19.8% respectively. The results indicate that the technological attributes of interactivity can explain a large proportion of variance for structural and cognitive capitals. Moreover, R^2 value of Guanxi network is 29.6%, demonstrating that the two dimensions of social capitals can explain a large proportion of variance for Guanxi network. The above analysis suggests a good explanatory power of the theoretical model.



Note: Path coefficient are significant at: $^{*}P<0.05$, $^{**}P<0.01$

Figure 2 Structural Model Analysis Results

4.3.3 Mediation Test

This study followed Sobel's procedure to examine if the relationship between independent variables(IV) and dependent variables(DV) are reduced(partial mediation) or completely diminished(full mediation) after adding mediation variables(M) into the structural model, as suggested in the previous literature[40,41]. The analysis results of Sobel test are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Sobel Test Results

Path Relationships	a	b	S_a	S_b	Sobel Test Ratio	Mediation Effect
Interactivity→Social Interaction →Guanxi Network	0.464	0.165	0.046	0.064	2.498*	Partial Mediation
Interactivity → Shared Understanding → Guanxi Network	0.298	0.200	0.069	0.065	2.506*	Partial Mediation

Note: a: Beta of IV→M; b: Beta of M→DV; S_a: Standard errors of a; S_b: Standard errors of b

4.3.4 Post-hoc Analysis

Previous literature argued that the formation of Guanxi network may be contingent upon network size. In the Wechat Moments, network size is manifested in an individual's friend number. Thus this study further conducts a post-hoc analysis to examine if the impact mechanism of interactivity on Guanxi network differs according to the network size in the Wechat Moments. The overall sample is divided into two groups, with one group of users possess more than 200 friends (big network size), while the other group of users possess less than 200 friends (small network size) on average. Following the calculation approach suggested by [37], this study statistically tests the significance of path coefficient differences across the two sub-groups. The t-test analysis results are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Path Coefficient Comparison between Users of Big and Small Network Size

Path Relationship	Path coefficients		$t_{spooled}$
	Big Network (N_1=122)	Small Network (N_2=165)	
Interactivity→Social Interaction	0.519**	0.439**	13.835**
Interactivity→Shared Understanding	0.340**	0.253**	11.153**
Social Interaction→Guanxi Network	0.349**	0.319**	3.788**
Shared Understanding→Guanxi Network	0.258**	0.346**	-10.413**

Note: *P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, NS represents Not Significant

As noted in Table 6, the effects of interactivity on social interaction and shared understanding are significantly stronger for users from big network size than users from small network size. The result suggests that users who have more friends in the Wechat Moments are more attracted by the interactivity attributes of the mobile social platform. Moreover, the path coefficient between social interaction and Guanxi Network is slightly larger for users from big network size than users from small network size, indicating that users with more friend number are more likely affected by structural capital when building Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments. Interestingly, the path coefficient between shared understanding and Guanxi network is significantly higher for users from small network size than users from big network size. The result demonstrates that users with less friend number are more likely influenced by cognitive capital when building Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments.

5. Discussions and Implications

5.1. Discussion of Findings

There are three salient findings concluded from the empirical results. Firstly, this study examined the relationship between interactivity and social capital in the new research context of Wechat Moments. It is interesting to discover that interactivity is a significant technology affordance that positively influence social interaction and shared understandings. Accordingly, individuals' social interactions and mutual understandings will be greatly improved when the platform has empowered them more freedom to read and comment on their favorite information, communicate and interact intimately with friends, and receive feedback from other members instantly. Secondly, this study examined the relationship between structural capital, cognitive capital and relational capital in the emerging context of Wechat Moments. In particular, Guanxi is introduced in the research model to represent relational capital in order to adapt to the specific cultural context in China. The results suggest that structural capital and cognitive capital have positive effects on Guanxi network. On the one hand, intense social interactions with other members are beneficial to build Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments. On the other hand, mutual understandings and common goals can also facilitate the establishment of a strong Guanxi network in the mobile social platform. Last but not least, this study considered friend number (representing a user's network size) as a significant moderator in the research model. The results demonstrate that the impact mechanism of interactivity on Guanxi network is contingent upon network size in the Wechat Moments.

5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications

For theoretical implications, this study makes three major contributions to the extant literatures. Firstly, this study introduces Chinese Guanxi as a significant relational capital in the research framework, and unpacks the significant antecedents of Guanxi network building in the Wechat Moments from a social capital theoretical perspective. By integrating social capital with Guanxi theory, this study found that structural capital (social interaction) and cognitive capital (shared understanding) play significant roles in facilitating Guanxi network building in the Wechat Moments. The research findings can further extend social capital literatures in the emerging new research context. Secondly, this study unpacks the impact mechanism of interactivity on Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments from a technology affordance theoretical perspective. Social media was considered as a significant antecedent of Guanxi network in the organizational research context. However, to our knowledge, few studies have specified what specific social media attributes are most beneficial to build Guanxi network in the mobile social platform. Drawing upon technology affordance theory, this study identified interactivity as a significant technology attribute in the research framework. The research findings can provide a comprehensive understanding regarding the relationship between social media affordance and users' Guanxi network building in the emerging new research context of Wechat Moments. Last but not least, this study also uncovers the moderating effect of network size on the path relationships among interactivity, social interaction, shared understanding and Guanxi network. The empirical findings can further extend the boundary condition of the proposed research model.

For practical implications, this study can provide guidelines for the administrators of Wechat Moments platform in terms of platform development and management. The administrators of the platform need recognize the significant influence of interactivity in building Guanxi network and enhance platform quality accordingly. In particular, users' perceptions of active control, two-way communication and synchronicity are significant drivers of social interactions and sharing under-standings in the Wechat Moments. This demonstrates that users are more likely to participate in the platform if they can voluntarily select their favorite information, conveniently communicate with friends, and rapidly receive feedback without time and location limit. Thus the platform administrators need to add more interactive modules and promote an effective communication environment in the Wechat Moments, in order to facilitate an active interaction and a better understanding among friends. This is beneficial for the establishment of Guanxi network in the mobile social platform.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

Drawing upon social capital theory and interactivity theory, this study develops a research model to examine the impact mechanism of interactivity in building Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments platform. We conducted an online survey in China and collected 287 valid data from Wechat users. Structural equation modelling analysis results suggest that users' perception of interactivity is a significant antecedent of social interaction and shared understanding, which in turn promote users' Guanxi network in the mobile social platform. In addition, analysis results of the control variables further suggest that users with a smaller friend network are more active in building Guanxi network in the Wechat Moments. This study has several limitations that leave open future research directions. Firstly, this study used cross-sectional data to examine the theoretical model and all data were collected from one source. Future research could take a longitudinal approach and collected data from different sources, in order to further confirm the causal relationship among the constructs. Secondly, this study conducted a survey in China, which may limit the generalization of the empirical research findings. Future studies can extend the sample size and investigate users from other countries, in order to obtain more reliable statistical analysis results and explore if there exist cultural differences. Thirdly, future studies can also add user's privacy concern as a contingency factor in the research model, in order to examine their moderating effects on Guanxi network building in the Wechat Moments.

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